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EUGENE V. ROSTOW

January 9, 1980

The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance
The Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Cy,

It was an interesting meeting for your guests this morning. I hope it was useful to you and to the President.

I believe there was a consensus at the meeting, as George Ball said, agreeing with your analysis of the Soviet move into Afghanistan, but concluding that the responses proposed are inadequate. To me, the open use of Soviet troops on a mission of conquest outside Eastern Europe is a new and ominous development, signalling not "The End of Detente" (which has always been an illusion), or "A Return to the Cold War," but the first open skirmish of Hot War. That is one of the main reasons why it is so important to do everything reasonable to prolong and intensify the battle in Afghanistan itself. (Remember that the British defense in Greece and Crete slowed up the German attack on the U.S.S.R. by three weeks, and therefore made it possible to win the war.) This is the last clear chance we have to stop the process of Soviet expansion without general war. It is comparable to the Rhineland crisis or the Czech crisis of the Thirties. If the Soviets move in Iran, or follow a Baluchistan strategy, the fat will be in the fire.

Of course we must do much more than prolong the Afghan War. I suggest the following scenario for your consideration:

1. The President should make a special speech to the Congress and the nation -- not in his State of the Union address, unless he is willing to make it much longer than usual -- announcing a real turn in policy. I enclose a draft, already a bit out of date, but perhaps of use. The essential point is that it takes two to tango. If the U.S.S.R. continues to ignore the rules of the Charter, we shall have to do so as well -- a threat with obvious implications for Cuba, Libya, Soviet bases in Africa, etc. I was glad to hear so much pious talk about international law this morning. You and I have discussed this subject before -- i.e., about Rhodesia!

2. Send Foy Kohler (and only Foy Kohler, whom the Russians know well and respect) to say,

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(a) Afghanistan has to be a buffer state, as neutral as Switzerland;

(b) do not touch Iran, which is still protected by our commitment, and is as much our sphere of influence as East Germany or Czechoslovakia is yours; and

(c) the President meant every word in his speech, especially the passage dealing with the theme of the last sentence of paragraph one, above.

3. As I said at the meeting, with support from Jim Schlesinger, Fowler, Rumsfeld, Kirkland, Packard, Ball, Sisco, and many more people, the Soviets will take us seriously only if

(a) we begin at once to rebuild our Navy (to a much higher figure than 550 ships);

(b) we restore our second-strike strategic capacity by resuming the production of Minuteman III and deploying them in the shell-game mode (You misunderstood me on this point. I was not talking about MX, as you assumed, but about Minuteman III. MX cannot be ready before 1989, the period of our maximum vulnerability. Such a step will require the clear shelving of SALT II. Your present ambiguous posture on that point is wrong from every point of view, including that of Section 33 of the ACDA statute.); and

(c) we start readying the draft, and making it clear that we mean it. Other military decisions are required -- B-1, the neutron bomb, Tomahawk, ready mobile forces, advanced bases, research and development. But, as Joe Fowler said, a supplemental appropriation is convincing in itself. And the draft is vital. (If Britain had adopted conscription in 1935, would World War II have happened?)

4. We should revivify the CIA, and use it more, in situations like the ones we are facing. There is no way to counter Soviet covert operations otherwise, unless we are willing to start nipping off their forward bases.

The Committee on the Present Danger is at your disposal, as always, to be as helpful as possible, both in cheering when we agree, and in reasoning when we don't.

With warm good wishes,

Yours, as always,

EVR:ss
enclosure

cc: Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski